567 The several categories of captives are as follows.

1. The Yemdaogo, all of whom are of foreign origin (Boussanga and Gourounsi) and either bought or captured during a war.

2. The daporé or dapobi (house slaves) who are the decendants of slaves. [88]

3. The bengaré, former slaves of the Peulh, who have abandoned their masters and put themselves under the sole authority of the Mogho Naba.

4. The Kamboiensé.

The Various Types of Slaves

567 Daporé ("living behind the house"). (a) The daporé belonging to the Mogho Naba. At Ouagadougou there is a section called
● 563 Dapoya, and its inhabitants are called Dapobi. They are wrongly considered (even by themselves) to be captives. Of Kibissi origin (we have noted that the Kibissi, the Ninissi, and the Gourounsi were the original inhabitants of the present Mossi area), they came of their own volition to Obri-Bangrenaba (Naba Oubri's chief of the bangré slaves), and he presented them to the emperor. It has been impossible to find out who was reigning when they arrived. The Mogho Naba first installed them at Wavoussé and later behind his house where they acted as guards and also were entrusted with important responsibilities.

These are voluntary captives. They are therefore not yemsé in the usual sense of the word, since they were neither bought nor sold, and the emperor did not mistreat them, although he did not grant them, as foreigners, the same rights as those possessed by his [583] subjects. The dapobi could not marry Mossi girls. They were obliged to marry slaves, and that is perhaps why they are considered slaves themselves. The children of these marriages, called [89] dogyiri ("born in the house") make up the "house slave" class.

567 (b) Daporé of the Kamsaoughin and daporé of the canton chiefs. In addition to the foreign dapobi just mentioned, there are true dapobi who were either captured in battle or bought. The former are slaves of the Mogho Naba and are entrusted to the care of the Kamsaougho Naba, chief eunuch, who is responsible for guarding

231 bother to raise them; as a result the number of horses has decreased, and this country, formerly renowned for its mounts, may have none in a not too distant future.

Unfortunately, horses do not thrive in every part of the country; Ouagadougou is particularly deadly for them, although, to my knowledge, the true reason for this insalubrity has not yet been found. The natives attribute it to the water, and there is no doubt that horses watered at the wells are in better health than those watered at the streams; it is also true that horses thrive in areas only a few kilometers [136] from Ouagadougou. Europeans tend to attribute this mortality to the tsetse fly. The two opinions are easy to reconcile, for, on the one hand, tsetse flies prefer damp places, and, on the other hand, the [312] Ouagadougou wells contain salt of magnesium which purges the horses and thus checks the disease.

231 The Peul own fine herds of bovines, some rather small and without humps (small cattle), others large and humped (zebu). Traders also ● 563 use the zebu as a beast of burden. Much of this cattle belongs to the 437 Mossi who seldom tend their own herds but prefer to entrust them to the Peul shepherds who keep the milk in payment. An adult cow yields from two to four liters a day during the good season. The guardians, however, know how to make the best of this near slavery. When an animal dies it is never one of theirs, and if the owner of the herd /a Mossi/ dies without telling his heirs where his cattle is to be found and how many head he owns, the Peul carefully refrain from disclosing the herd entrusted to them. In former days they were slightly more conscientious because they feared retaliation, but now they bless the French occupation.

231 The herds are sometimes decimated by an epizootic disease, as happened in 1910 and 1911 when the Koupéla area was ravaged by what must have been the bovine plague or peripneumonia. The cows would cough, entirely lose their appetites, and die within a few days.

The Mossi also raise bees. The hives are made of straw or flexible sticks and placed in the trees; sometimes swarms of bees also settle in the hollow trunks of baobabs. The honey is gathered at the end and at the beginning of the winter season; the hive is smoked out and [273] the bees destroyed. Honey is used primarily to make bésé, a kind of hydromel which the Moslem Yarsé, Peul, and Haousa like very much, and which they are allowed to drink in spite of its fermentation; [237] whereas, in principle, millet beer is forbidden to them. The wax 306 is sold to the jewelry-makers who use it to make bracelets by the lost wax process.

M
566 may leave his master whenever he pleases, either to devote himself
M F to trade or to enter the service of another man; but often he gets all his work from his master.

M F 563 The Peul shepherds never were slaves of the Mossi, because they only knew how to watch the herds and were incapable of working the land. They were, nevertheless, held in severe vassalage by the Mossi, especially by the nabas, and served as victims in certain sacrifices. Some Mossi sold by the Yarsé or by other Mossi have occasionally been their slaves, especially in the Dori region called Gyémaré by the natives.

/15/ Chapter 2. Administration

M
157 The power of the chiefs and the submission of their subjects are characteristic traits of Mossi country. The spirit of submission permeates the whole Mossi mentality. The Mossi are not particularly secretive or incommunicative, as the Bambara are said to be. On the contrary, they talk quite freely to their friends, even of their personal affairs; this does not mean that they are unable to keep a secret, especially if it is the king's secret. Two individuals have to be equals if there is to be some freedom between them; this freedom may develop into a certain closeness, but never into friendship in the highest sense of the term. If the Mossi appears secretive, it is because he is afraid to offend someone more powerful than himself. He always yields before a chief, before someone who "has the strength," as he puts it, while inwardly he may retain his own opinion and act as he pleases. When a chief talks, he hears nothing but these words
M in reply: bé néré, naba — "That's it, that's right. I agree with you."
576 The Mossi salute, formerly used in all the Black empires of the Sudan, especially in the courts of Ghana, Mali, and Gao, provides good evidence of this mentality. When we first enter the country as foreigners, we are shocked to see a man thus lower himself before another man. In order to salute, the Mossi puts down his load, hat, and sword, removes his shoes, sits on the ground, folds his legs slightly, and leans the upper part of his body forward. The elbows rest against the ground, as far apart as possible; the forearms, folded in front of

304 Children are tattooed at any age, sometimes when already grown. Many Yarsé do not tattoo their children, and the Mossi themselves do not seem especially to hold to this barbarous custom which sometimes disfigures an individual. The tattooing is done with a razor, and powdered charcoal is put into the wounds. In order to soften the skin and to alleviate the pain, the whole face is covered with oil until the wounds are healed, leaving more or less accentuated scars depending on the success of the operation. Some natives are completely disfigured by thick excrescences of flesh as the result of a faulty operation.

Sorcerers sometimes have the strange idea of prescribing tattoo marks on the belly or lower back of children whose older siblings have [789] died. For instance, a woman had lost three of her children. She consulted a sorcerer when the fourth was born, and he declared with the greatest seriousness that the child would die if his buttocks were not marked with stripes and his belly with tattooings radiating from the navel. The child was marked accordingly, and he lived! Young girls nearly always tattoo their belly with lines extending radially from the navel; many adorn their chest above the bosom with small stripes running perpendicular to the breasts and parallel between them. The tattooing patterns we have described here are, of course, only the most widespread types, because there is a great variety of markings.

304 852 Just as there is no set age for tattooing, there is none for circumcision. Children of seven or eight are circumcised along with youths and even mature men. Circumcision does not seem to be a Mossi [184] custom, for it is not a general practice. In Ouagadougou province most children are circumcised, while in Koupéla province most of them are not. However, the custom is gaining yearly in Koupéla. The head of the family often has himself circumcised because he is ill, and his children follow suit. Thus circumcision is introduced into the family, for once the father has undergone the operation, his children do likewise. Sometimes the mother is a Yarga, thus from a 304 ●563 852 Moslem family, and her children are circumcised, a new gain for the practice. It also happens that children are drawn to it through sheer curiosity and the enticing assurances of the Peul and Yarsé, who are usually Moslems and thus circumcised, and who spread propaganda all around them. Excision, on the other hand, is universal.

/42/ When there is a group to be circumcised, their relatives set a date with the Peul who is to perform the operation. At dawn of that

304 day the one in charge of the circumcision, a wealthy Yarga or Mossi
563 who has the means to feed several of the people to be circumcised,
852 chooses a tree to serve as shelter for the operation. Rain need not be taken into account, for circumcision is always performed during the dry season from December to April, when agricultural work is at a
[778] standstill. The tree is surrounded with straw mats, forming the téoo or sacred enclosure which no one who is not circumcised may come near without running the risk of being insulted and often beaten; if he should dare to step inside it, he would be stricken by the greatest misfortunes. The Peul sets out a flat stone, sacrifices a chicken in order to make the spirit of the tree benevolent toward those to be circumcised, and operates on the boys one by one. Drums are played throughout the operation to drown the cries of the victims.

852 For three days afterwards the newly circumcised boys do nothing. They rest and tend their wounds. They remain isolated from the rest
[535] of the community for two or three months, sometimes even longer. Judging by the dances which close the festivities, dancing must be their primary concern during that period of time. They also thresh the millet of those who invite them to do so, but no uncircumcised person may join them, no uninitiated individual may come near them.
[198] They do not speak the Mossi language at this time, but a special tongue of which they learn enough to serve them in their everyday needs. Woe to those who forget and use their native tongue; they are
[551] beaten with switches made of a kind of willow. Even their names are changed, and no one may call them by their Mossi names.

The circumcised boys are divided in two groups, one "male" and one "female." One of the groups bears the name of the hyena (kwara in their language) and the other is called masalro, whose French equivalent we do not know. The hyena group must strain their wits to snatch food, even from the other circumcised boys, who are kept constantly on the alert. The other group makes improper gestures during the dance.

852 The circumcised boys are covered with gray dust to alter their
293 appearance completely. A tail is fastened to the back of their breech-
776 cloth, hanging to the ground. It is made of plaited cotton thread and
481 ends in a pompon. Its function is to drive off the kikirsi spirits, who apparently do not like circumcised persons. The boys walk bent over and leaning on sticks like old men. This is done to test their obedience and to see if they listen carefully to what they are told.

852 When they go into the bush, either to cut down straw or for any other reason, they sing invocations to the spirits of the paths and of the trees in order to propitiate them, to draw their blessing, and to avert illness. They chase everyone in their path, approach the villages, and, if they can, seize a few chickens, goats, or sheep as an extra tidbit. This is the custom, and they even steal the animals of their relatives in this fashion. At night they come up near the huts and beat everyone they meet; they take everything they can find, and no one would think of resisting them. /43/ In any case, during that time, people take good care of their children and send them plenty of food. To have a child undergoing circumcision is a burden to a family.

852 When the circumcised group consists largely of Moslems, Yarsé or
563 Peul, the one in charge of the circumcision assembles them during
869 rest periods, in the evening, or sometimes in the middle of the night, in order to instruct them. There does not seem to be any esoteric doctrine, and the instructions deal with the glorification of ancestors who were also circumcised there. Only those who are circumcised can enter heaven and have many children; those who are not will taste no happiness in the other life and will remain sterile. The group is also taught that God sits under a black tree on a sheep skin, that he eats from a dish and drinks from a bottle. It is all very childish. They are also told that they must not disclose to anyone, under penalty of death or at least of serious illness, what they have seen and learned during the circumcision period. This is to prevent them from revealing the robberies committed during that time and from discouraging those who should like to undergo the operation; for although it is tempting to eat well, to play a great deal, and especially to wear beautiful clothes, it is also unpleasant to be lashed with willows at the slightest slip, or for not dancing well, for quarreling with or insulting someone, for speaking Mossi, for being slow to go to work.

852 Occasionally, at circumcision time, two sticks are found on the path near the market. They were placed there on purpose, and if one looks to the right and left, he will see two children, all covered with dust and wearing dirty breechcloths. They are newly circumcised boys who are begging, and passersby drop a few cowries to the ground.

852 All these ceremonies are soon to end. The clothes are ready, and
302 the children are getting tired and restive. The one in charge of the circumcision decides that the boys are to be shaved, that is, that the circumcision period will end in two weeks. The hair of the circumcised boys is not shaved off completely: strips of hair alternate with

782 755 Then the sacrificer and his assistants eat the victim, but the patient does not partake of it.

782 751 [753] The silent sacrifice, mand'moukou—also called "egg sacrifice," mand'gellé, because an egg is offered—is made in the following circumstances. Some diseases have the dismal faculty of talking like people. They call someone, who answers to his name thinking that a human being has called him. This is sufficient, he will fall ill and die.

The sorcerer decrees that such a disease threatens the village, and that a silent sacrifice is in order. The naba and the elders anxiously delegate one of the men among them to offer the sacrifice. On the following day in the morning, the appointed elder takes an egg, often also a kola nut and special roots, and follows the path which the disease would take if it came to the village. He walks in complete silence. When he reaches a certain point, he brings the egg close to his lips and tells it secretly that a disease threatens the village, and that if the disease tries to follow this path, the egg must stop it. Then he places the egg, kola nut, and roots upon the ground or buries them and retraces his steps. /94/ The egg, a chicken-to-be that cannot yet talk, is chosen as a symbol of the silence that must be observed to ward off the disease.

In the procedure called "bad sacrifice," the victim is not eaten by those present but left on the spot, where it rots or is eaten by vultures and hyenas. Any animal may be offered in this fashion, but the sorcerer alone may decide when the sacrifice is called for. It is usually performed to avert a general misfortune, for example, to ward off a contagious disease that will devour the animal and leave the people alone. The victim is sometimes abandoned alive and driven into the bush.

782 Anything may be offered in sacrifice if the sorcerer says so: kola nuts, cowries, the ashes of certain barks or roots, red stones, the inner fruit of the karite tree, etc. Chickens are the victims most commonly chosen, but sacrifices of goats and sheep are not uncommon. We have already mentioned the guinea hen as the sacrifice preferred by the kikirsi. The nabas are sometimes required to sacrifice cows or donkeys in certain cases. Some nabas, but not all, may sacrifice horses. Finally, even men were sacrificed in the old days. Certain tangamma [563] were greedy for human sacrifices, and the Peul were often used for this purpose. Natives with light skins tending to red, thus closer to [826] the color of ancestral spirits which are said to be white, were sacrificed to these spirits in preference to any others.

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from Gambakha in the eleventh century to found small kingdoms in a country which had already been colonized by the Mossi. However, there is a drawback to this opinion: the existence among the Mossi of an autochthonous people (Nioniossé or Foulsé /Fulse/) still extant, who are far from having, always and everywhere, merged with the Mossi. According to my observations made in the area (I spent three years in Yatenga, from 1913 to 1916), there are still more Nioniossé than Mossi in Yatenga, 100, 000 as against 70, 000 (see my Noir du Yatenga, pages 665 and 666). The existence of this earlier people proves that the Mossi colonization is a relatively recent one. Also, the Mossi could not have penetrated and survived in an already inhabited region in any way other than by forming small, conquering military monarchies. I think therefore, that the Mossi came, with their chiefs, from Dagomba, and that they didn't reach the present Mossi country until ... But we are coming back to the chronological question which we will deal with later on.

●[563]

174 For the moment, then, we are still reduced to dealing with hypotheses insofar as the origins of the Mossi are concerned. We know that the Mossi come from Dagomba and that they probably entered the country as conquerors. But where did they come from then? From the north-east? From the south? From the east? We cannot yet answer with certainty, just as we cannot for so many other historical, philosophical, and scientific questions, alas!

Grammatici certant et adhuc sub judice lis est.

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
FA28 Mossi FA28

composed of two major groups of communities," Fortes goes on to describe this pattern succinctly:

> On the one side are those that claim to be descendants of immigrants from parts of the country other than their present habitats. On the other side are communities that claim to be the autochthonous inhabitants. . . . Many of the immigrant communities claim descent from forbears of the Mampuru ruling stock. Though now wholly amalgamated with the alleged aboriginal inhabitants, they have certain ritual observances and a system of chieftainship similar to those of the Mamprusi. . . . The institution distinctive of the autochthonous communities is the office of "Custodian of the Earth." This ritual office, involving priestly functions in connection with the cult of the Earth, is found among many West African peoples from the Senegal to the mouth of the Niger. In the Voltaic region it is the exclusive prerogative of the autochthonous communities.[1]

The inhabitants of the Yatenga at the time of the arrival of the Mossi were the Kurumankobe, or Fulse, as they are called by the Mossi. Their descendants recognize their indigenous origin but have become almost wholly acculturated to the Mossi. While most Mossi bear the sib name Wedraogo and maintain political control in the Yatenga, the descendants of the Kurumankobe usually have the sib name Savadogo and are excluded from the exercise of political authority. They have retained the custodianship of the earth, and the elders of their lineages and sibs are the Mossi's *Tenga Soba namba*, their "earth custodians," charged with propitiating the supernatural forces of nature.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The present king of the Yatenga, the *Yatenga Naba*, is a lineal descendant of the first ruler, Naba Yadiga. The members of the lineage of the king are called "those who maintain themselves upon us" (*riim namba*). Directly subordinate to the authority of the Yatenga Naba are his four grand ministers, each of whom has authority over a particular province (*solum*) of the Yatenga.[2]

The province over which each of the grand ministers presides as lord is divided up into a number of cantons (*tense*), each of which is ruled by a chief who is the central political authority both of the village in which he resides and of the villages within the canton. Like the province, the concept of the canton is not precisely territorial. Some villages may owe

[1] Meyer Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 6.

[2] These provinces refer not only to geographical areas of the kingdom but to particular categories of the population. For example, the *Balum Naba* has direct authority over the southern regions of the Yatenga and indirect authority over the cantons of Riziam and Zittenga, political entities which have never fully recognized the central authority of the *Yatenga Naba*. This same minister is also especially charged with maintaining liaison with certain of the more important earth custodians throughout the Yatenga.

/451/ Book Four

Black Warriors and Conquerors

Chapter I

The Mossi -- Occupations

101 The Mossi are settled between the twelfth and fourteenth de-
131 grees of north latitude, and between the second and fifth degrees of west longitude. To the south, they extend slightly beyond the twelfth degree of latitude. They are indeed to be found in Saraboutenga, Rakaye, Béré, and Tenkodogo, but this does not bring them too far south of the twelfth degree. To the north, on the other hand, they do not quite reach the fourteenth degree.

161 The Mossi form a rather large group which occupies, in the
●563 center of the area, the circle /an administrative division/ of Ouagadougou; to the northwest, the circle of Ouahigouya; to the southeast, the residency /administrative center/ of Tenkodogo; and to the east of the latter, the circle of Fada N'Gourma. Of course, the Mossi do not make up the total population of these four districts. In the Ouahigouya circle, there are the Habé /Habe/ and Houmbébé /Humbe/ to the northwest, and the Samoro /Samo/ to the south. In the Ouagadougou circle, which may be regarded as the center of Mossi territory, there are the Kipirsi to the east. In the Tenkodogo residency there are the Boussansé /Busansi/ to the south and in the circle of Fada N'Gourma the Gourmantché or Gourmanké /Gurma/ to the east. The Mossi, however, make up
161 the /452/ greater part of the total population in all four areas. In the circle of Ouagadougou, they number 750,000, in the residency of Tenkodogo, 122,000, in the residency of Leo, 1,000. This adds up to 873,000 for the circle of Ouagadougou as a whole. Assuming that there are 200,000 Mossi in the circles of Ouahigouya and Fada N'Gourma (a very approximate figure), a total of 1,073,000 Mossi is obtained. This makes them by far the most numerous group in all of French West Africa. The whole of our Dahomey, for example,

174 "The Yarsé or Ouangarbé," he says in the Monographie of the Ouagadougou circle, "entered the territory during the reign of Koundoumié, sixth Moro Naba.

"At that time, as tradition has it, seven Mandé traders named respectively Bolle, Rambéré, Séré, Pallom, Morebanom, Parirabo, and Mari Konda, were traveling through Mossi territory with their merchandise. They called upon the Moro Naba, and the latter, impressed by their intelligence, conceived the thought of keeping those superior individuals in his own employ. He plied them with gifts, offered them wives, and installed them nearby in a quarter that was given the name of Zoroné. According to this account, the descendants of these men gave rise to the various Yarsé communities which are found today throughout the circle."

According to Moulins, therefore, the Yarsé would have entered Mossi territory toward the end of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth, since Naba Koundoumié's time may be set around 1300. I believe that this opinion is more accurate than Marc's, in view of the fact that the Yarsé no longer know the Mandé language and speak only Mossi. It would be surprising if these Mandé had come to forget their mother tongue within a century and a half, although this might occur in five centuries. Nevertheless, one detail disturbs me in the Moulins version: the seven Mandé traders bear Mossi names, Bolle, Rambéré, Pallom, etc., instead of Mandé names as would be natural. No matter what the truth may be, it is more probable that the Yarsé settled in Mossi territory during the thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D. than in the eighteenth century.

174 ●563 3. The same problem of a date of settlement applies to the Foulbé /Fulani/, and there again Marc and Moulins are in complete disagreement.

"The Peul probably came to Mossi territory in the footsteps of the Mandé-Dioula," says Marc, page 143. Moulins has a different opinion. /466/ "The Peuhl, he says, "must have settled in the Mossi area at a very remote time. It even seems that they had long been there at the time of the Dagomba invasion." This would take us beyond the twelfth century A.D. In any case, it is probable that the Foulbé were established in Mossi territory in small groups, as they are still today, well before the eighteenth century.

241 2. The sououga, a knife used to cut down the heads of millet.

3. The gouégo, a curved knife, a kind of scythe which is used to cut straw, for example when preparing thatch for hut roofs.

To summarize, cultivation is the most important pursuit among the Mossi. It insures the subsistence of this population which is [161] relatively dense, since there are 25 inhabitants per square kilometer, a very high figure unusual for West Africa. The species of cultivated plants are as numerous as anywhere else, and the agricultural tools tend to be superior. In spite of all this, the Mossi are not very good cultivators, and in this respect I believe that they must be placed beneath the Bobo, Gourounsi, Habé, Bambara, etc. One senses that the Mossi descend at least in part from people who were once familiar with easier and more fruitful ways of procuring food (such as war and attendant loot) or, to put it another way, one senses the meeting of two groups, one of which was truly adept at cultivation while the other was less so. Thus, although the Mossi are cultivators first and foremost and actually subsist on cultivation, the latter is not as basic to them as it is to the Bobo, the Gourounsi, etc. They do practice cultivation, this is even by far their chief subsistence activity, and yet one cannot say that they are, in all respects, good cultivators.

231 Are they at least noteworthy stockbreeders?

To this we may give forthwith a negative answer. The Mossi are very mediocre, not to say worthless breeders. This is not to mean, incidentally, that there is no cattle in Mossi territory. There [563] is a great deal, on the contrary, and this stems from the presence of the Foulbé, who are cattle herders, as much as from the presence of the Yarsé, who /487/ have always owned considerable quantities of cattle, and from the density of the Mossi population. The Mossi themselves, nevertheless, own little cattle. To be more exact, they have a low per capita average of cattle.

We might list over-all or partial figures, but those most recently 231 compiled are vitiated by the fact that Mossi territory lost part of 563 its cattle in recent years due to repeated famines around 1906-1908 and to an overly rigorous tax system that went into effect a little later. We shall, therefore, merely validate our statement that the

231 Mossi are very mediocre breeders by describing their manner of
563 caring for their animals. Instead of tending them or having this done by their young men, they nearly always hand them over to the Foulbé for herding. This is also done whenever possible by the Bobo, Nounouma, and Sissala in the Leo residency, but it is not done by the Kassonboura, Nankana, or Dagari. If the head of a Mossi
231 soukala is wealthy, he employs his own private Peuhl herder. If he
563 is of average means or poor, he makes an arrangement with other
404 Mossi in the same circumstances, and they all get together to pay a single herder for their cattle. It is the poorer Foulbé, for their part, who agree to herd Mossi cattle in this fashion.

The agreement that binds both parties grants the milk and butter to the Peuhl, but the increase of the herd devolves to the owner. This agreement is made without any definite time limits, and it is only broken if the herder fails to tend the animals properly. If he does his job well, on the other hand, he herds them indefinitely, and when he dies his son succeeds him. By the same token, when the Mossi owner dies, his son leaves the animals in the hands of the same Peuhl.

The Foulbé in charge of tending the herds live in low, conical straw huts at the back of the Mossi villages that own the herds. Not far from their huts, they build an enclosure where they leave the cattle during the night. They take the animals to graze in the bush in the morning, and bring them back in the evening. Whenever one of the Mossi owners wants milk or butter, he buys it from the Peuhl. Sometimes the latter offers him milk as a gift.

We shall see later, when we discuss the Foulbé, that in former
[567] times the Mossi often enslaved the small Foulbé bands that /488/ came with the intention of settling in Mossi territory. The Mossi chiefs would confiscate the herds, and then, since they were unwilling to care for them themselves, they would return them to the dispossessed Foulbé in usufruct and in accordance with the agreement we have just described. It must nevertheless be said that all
563 Foulbé in Mossi territory were not subjected to this high-handed procedure. When we occupied Mossi territory, there were some free and wealthy Foulbé, some Foulbé villages with chiefs of their own. Actually, those Foulbé were by far the more numerous.

563 From a political standpoint, they were subject to the high Mossi powers just like the Yarsé, but like the latter and aside from this, they had preserved all their personal and economic freedom.

231 Let us add a few words about the various races of livestock which are to be found in Mossi territory.

As far as cattle is concerned, there are three races in the Ouagadougou circle:

1. Humped cattle, which is found mostly in the northern and eastern parts of the circle. This beef is tall, with a short dewlap and large horns. It is well suited to porterage, and furnishes excellent butcher's meat. There are some 5,000 head of humped cattle in the circle, 2,000 males and 3,000 females.

2. Humpless or local cattle. This beef has small horns, is found chiefly in the western and southwestern regions, and is usually designated by the name of Kipirsi cattle. It is not suited to porterage and yields inferior meat, but it is much stronger than the humped beef and better adapted to the climate.

3. Ordinary cattle, the result of a cross between the two preceding species. This beef has the strength of the Kipirsi cattle and is considerably taller. It is, furthermore, capable of being fattened, and can thus furnish meat of very good quality. This type predominates among the Tenkodogo Mossi. It comprises about 20,000 head, 8,000 males and 12,000 females.

It is therefore the local cattle (71,000 head), which is most numerous. The humped beeves are worth from 40 to 100 francs, [435] /489/ and the humpless beeves from 30 to 40 francs. The natives [232] are familiar with castration but practice it at random on any subject that comes to hand.

231 Prior to the arrival of the French, the Mossi used their cattle for meat and for sacrifices, but the two uses really amounted to one 782 (the former) since the animals offered to a dead person are always 651 eaten by the living. Nowadays, the Mossi sell their cattle to pay their tax. They still eat meat, although apparently not as much as before. The need to pay a tax which has been understood imperfectly, raised too rapidly and levied too harshly over the past few years, has forced them to save their cattle in order to sell it on the southern kola markets.

323 the oven is built in one day. All those who cooperated in building
467 it have the right to use it.

323 At Kombisiguiri, some potters have no ovens. They merely spread out millet stalks on the ground and place the canari on top. They light the millet, and the pots are fired in this fashion.

/521/ It is the potter himself who makes his tools, his crude basin, and his pestle.

Let us point out that the baouré, huge jars where the threshed millet is stored and which are about 2.50 meters high and proportionately wide, which look like enormous sandstone ink bottles and which I saw in the northern part of Mossi territory, are not made by the potters. They are built in each soukala by the inhabitants.

After the potters come the pipe makers. It is the old women who make pipes among the Mossi. They fetch the appropriate clay,
[495] fashion the bowl of the pipe, and fire it. They sell it for 5 cowries.

333 Let us not forget the bricklayers, who are called tammétéba in Mossi. Like Gourounsi bricklayers, Mossi ones are primarily cultivators, and their fields net them much more than their trade. As among the Gourounsi, the bricklayers are not paid. They are merely fed for the duration of their work.

322 Following work with earth and clay, let us proceed to woodworking. It is represented among the Mossi by the koukoupersba and séta.

Among certain populations of West Africa, the woodworker's trade is exercised by the blacksmiths (for example, among the Malinké, Dialonké, etc.). Among the Mossi, as among the Gourounsi, it is sharply distinct from the blacksmith's trade and exercised by the koukoupersba, who are counterparts of the Gourounsi voguésara and Mandé debakala-lésemba. The koukoupersba make daba handles, axe handles, small chairs which are very nicely tooled with a hot iron and which represent a horse's back with two crude heads, two outlines of a head, on either side.

Actually, the koukoupersba are primarily cultivators. They work the soil during the rainy season. During the dry season, they make the various items just mentioned.

322 In addition to these people, there are the Laobé among the
563 Mossi, that is to say, /522/ those men who are employed by the

322 563 Foulbé as makers of wooden gourds and other items of a similar nature. The Mossi call them séta. Since there are many Foulbé in Mossi territory, there are Laobé also. Some of them have left their masters to settle independently, and they are now free.

May we present one, by the name of Louri. During the winter season he works the soil, although very slightly like all other Laobé and Foulbé, and he also makes wooden gourds. During the dry season, he only makes gourds. Owing to his very mediocre cultivating abilities, his trade nets him more than his fields.

His tools are as follows:

322 413 1. First, a large ax called diendé, which he uses to cut heavy timber.

2. The saotaré, a kind of well-sharpened hoe with a very short handle, which is used to fashion the gourd on the outside.

3. The tépotondé, a kind of hoe with a very short handle and a very sharp blade, which is used to hollow out the gourd.

4. The menkéré, which is also used to hollow out the inside of the gourd.

5. The kéfirga, a long-handled tool with a curved, sharp blade, which is used for the same purpose as the two preceding tools.

It is the blacksmith who makes the iron parts of these tools.

322 563 435 Their value is as follows:

The axe is worth	2,000 cowries
The saotaré is worth	500 "
The tépotondé is worth	500 "
The menkéré is worth	1,500 "
The kéfirga is worth	200 "

322 563 In order to make his gourds, our Laobé uses the wood of the following trees: hèdè, bouagaf, saboutoungaf, and bembé.

This Laobé comes from Badongo (a village located 31 kilometers from /523/ Ouagadougou). He has a wife and two children. [561] He is a former slave, a captive from Laobé, whose masters had settled at Badongo. The master left, and now he is free. Formerly he worked for his master, and now he works for himself. He makes gourds in advance and has them sold at market by his wife. He [435] sells the small ones for 100 cowries, the medium ones for 300, the large ones for 500 (0.10, 0.30, 0.50 franc).

322 As for plots, he cultivates a field of small millet, a little
563 maize around his hut, a few peanuts and underground peas.

His soukala consists of a single and lone hut where he lives with his wife and two children.

Here is another example of a Laobé or séta, this one living at Kombisiguiri. He has left the Foulbé to settle among the Mossi.

[413] His woodworking tools are the same as those we mentioned above: diendé, tépotondé, menkéré, saotaré, and kéfirga.

[313] To make his gourds, he cuts down a whole tree, either hèdè or n'kouna, which yields the best wood, or bembé, sibi, or n'pékou, or else saboutoungaï, sanktougaï, or satantougaï, or finally bouagaï, which is less good. Gourds made of hèdè wood sell for more than others.

[435] He makes two kinds of gourds, small ones worth 50 cowries and large ones, some of which sell for up to 1,000 cowries. He makes his gourds without waiting for an order and has them taken to market by his wives.

Our Laobé does not work in the fields at all. From one end of the year to another, he makes his wooden gourds and they bring him enough to live on.

322 In addition, he makes mortars and pestles to crush grain. A
563 small mortar and pestle is worth 1,000 cowries, a large mortar
435 and pestle 2,000. He also makes large wooden spoons which he sells for 50 cowries, and clogs or wooden sandals of a sort which are worn during the rainy season and which he sells for 100 cowries.

/524/ There are eight people in his soukala, himself, his two wives, and his five children.

322 Let us add that a few, a very few, Mossi have begun to make wooden gourds like the Laobé; but contrary to the habits of the latter, they spend more time in the fields than at their trade. There are a few at Polsogo, a village located 12 kilometers from Ouagadougou. They must not be confused with the koukouperséba mentioned above.

There are also bow makers among the Mossi. They are called tempéséda. They are primarily cultivators, and their fields net them much more than their trade. They exercise the latter only for the purpose of getting a few cowries to buy condiments such as

286 291 "This kind of braiding is not exported."

294 563 There are tailors as well as weavers among the Mossi. The tailor's trade, incidentally, is exercised in Mossi lands not only by the Mossi but also by the Yarsé and by some of the Haoussa who are settled in the territory.

294 Mossi tailors till the soil during the winter season and work as tailors during the dry season. Their fields net them more than their trade.

Most Mossi tailors do custom work. Cotton strips are brought to them, and they sew them into the required garment. Others purchase cotton strips, make them into various garments (skirts, cloaks, trousers, caps) and have their wives sell them at market. Those, however, are in the minority.

A cloak is called fougou in Mossi, a skirt fougoupoko from poko, "woman" and fougou, "cloak." Trousers are called koulouga.

/534/ Let us add that garment manufacture has remained a family industry in much of Mossi territory. Many Mossi can sew, and they make their own clothes by sewing up cotton strips. Let [462] us note here that as in nearly all of West Africa, it is the men who sew rather than the women. In this area of Africa, indeed, sewing is essentially a male occupation rather than a female one.

Now to present a Ouagadougou tailor, Mohammadi Bagaré.

He tills the soil and does nothing else during the winter season. He exercises his tailor's trade during the dry season.

He does custom work. Those who want a garment bring him cotton strips in sufficient numbers, and he makes the requested gar- [435] ment. He asks 1,000 cowries to make a large cloak, 500 for a small one, 200 for a skirt. To make a cap he asks only for one kola nut, which is worth 50 cowries at Ouagadougou. He takes 200 cowries for a pair of trousers.

It takes him five days' work to make a large cloak, two days for a small one, one day for a skirt, two days for a pair of trousers, one hour for a cap.

[412 431] His only working tool is the needle. Mohammadi uses European needles.

161 How many inhabitants did this Mossi empire number, with its careful centralization, its hierarchy of chiefs, and its class of nobles, at the time of the French occupation (1896)?

In 1909 the census yielded 861,700 souls in the circle of Ouagadougou itself and 273,000 in the Tenkodogo residency, or a total of 1,135,000 inhabitants. From this figure, however, we must deduct the independent Boussansé (99,000 in the Tenkodogo residency) and also the people of the Kipirsi (Ouagadougou circle; in theory they are ruled by the Mossi, in fact they are independent; they may be estimated at 40,000). This leaves, for the five subject provinces and the four vassal provinces, about 996,000 inhabitants. It may thus be said that the Moro Naba of Ouagadougou ruled over a population of about a million men.

161 Out of this million men, there were roughly /583/ 850,000 ● 563 Mossi, 40,000 Boussansé, 69,000 Yarsé, 32,000 Foulbé, 5,000 Silmi-Mossi, 1,000 Songhay (in the northern part of the Ouagadougou circle), and 1,000 Haoussa scattered here and there in the same fashion as the Yarsé and Foulbé.

161 We already know that this Ouagadougou empire did not make up the whole Mossi population. There stood alongside it two other kingdoms which must formerly have been subject to Ouagadougou but which had gained their independence long before our occupation. One of them, Yatenga, with Ouahigouya as its capital, was located to the northwest of the Ouagadougou empire. The other one, Gourma, with Fada N'Gourma as its capital, was located to the east. Those two kingdoms may have added up between them to a population of 450,000 in which the Mossi element predominated, with Habé and Samo elements in the Ouahigouya circle, and Gourmanké elements in the circle of Fada N'Gourma.

In short, about a million and a half inhabitants were divided among the Mossi kingdoms in the bend of the Niger, with one million in the most important of those kingdoms, that of Ouagadougou.

161 The population of the Mossi was, and still is, extraordinarily 642 dense as compared with the over-all population density of West 648 Africa. Among the Mossi, indeed, there are about 25 inhabitants per square kilometer, while in French Guinea, for example, there is an average of 6 inhabitants per square kilometer. This stems

596 /234/ The kind of family found in the cantons of Ratenga and
592 Tougo is quite similar in type to the family among the Mossi of
182 Ouagadougou, or in its common types (3) which are characterized by

3. See my Noir du Soudan, pp. 544-553.

the fact that the zaka is identified with the single household, and only the total family and the single household remain.

This leads us to note that the average Mossi family of Yatenga, as we have described it above, is more compact, more communal, more integrated than the Mossi family of Ouagadougou.

182 This results, I believe, from the fact that the primitive element
563 of the population, the Foulsé (the basic element, let us not forget, at Ouagadougou as well as in Yatenga), who are more communal than
592 the Mossi, are still much more numerous in Yatenga than in the
596 Ouagadougou region. While in the latter area the Foulsé blended almost completely with the mass of invaders, in Yatenga they resisted more successfully, did not blend with them, and continued to make up the greater part of the population. In view of these circumstances, they probably exercised considerable influence on the morphology of the Mossi family, just as they gave it their prejudices against the ownership of cattle, etc.

This high proportion of the primitive communal element no doubt caused the structural differences between the Mossi family of the Ouagadougou region and that of Yatenga.

000 Women and the household.—We shall deal now with women and the household. We shall subdivide this section into a number of headings as follows.

1. Promise of marriage.
2. Persons whose consent is required to validate the promise of marriage.
3. Gifts.
4. Celebration and consummation of marriage.
5. Impediments to marriage.
6. Question of virginity.
7. Rights and duties of the husband and wife.
8. Polygamy.
9. Organization of the polygamous household.
10. Women's tasks.
11. The conjugal duty.

10:Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1964 FA28 Mossi FA28
Yatenga

ship itself and the contract of interlineage co-operation and solidarity which every marriage serves to establish or reinforce.[4]

Although this joking interchange is seen in its full implications when there is an immediate source of dissension between marriage partners, it may also occur in the absence of any specific difficulty. Then it is apparently indulged in simply because it is expected, and for the pleasure which the Mossi, like all people, derive from an occasion to exercise their wit. It is this relatively disinterested joking which has been most frequently described in the literature, and this may account for the failure of many scholars to perceive more fully the important social and psychological functions which joking may fulfill.

Conclusion

This paper has been written as a tentative step toward a reformulation of the various and disparate observations on joking contained in the anthropological literature. I have contended that an analysis of this literature indicates that wherever joking is institutionalized the structural relationship between the participants tends to be characterized by five significantly interrelated structural attributes: separation, reciprocity, ambivalence, equality, and independence. I have also indicated that such joking may serve as an adjustive mechanism by providing for the concurrent maintenance of communication, control, and the culturally harmless catharsis of potentially disruptive emotions.

A variety of forms of institutionalized joking found among the Mossi of Yatenga have been cited to illustrate these points. However, I suggest that the factors which cluster with this reliance on joking as an adjustive mechanism are not unique to the Mossi. Institutionalized joking reported for other parts of Africa appears to be structurally and processually similar.

Notes

1. A shorter version of this paper was read at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association held in San Francisco in November, 1963. It is based on field research conducted among the Mossi from 1954 to 1956 with the assistance of a Ford Foundation Fellowship.

2. Marriage between the members of descent groups united by a joking alliance is regarded by the Mossi as highly desirable, apparently in recognition of the useful role of joking as an adjustive mechanism. Once such a marriage is contracted, however, Ego and his wife must take care that their joking insults are directed only at the younger kinsmen of the other and that the insulting remarks are personal. It would, for example, be acceptable for Ego to call his wife's younger sister a disreputable shrew but dangerous to call her a slave (a term of disrespect used frequently in joking between sibs). To refer to her as a slave would cast unflattering aspersions on her entire kin group, including her mother and father, with whom, in their new status as parents-in-law, Ego may no longer joke.

3. I believe that joking is also institutionalized between the Mossi and the Yarse, a highly acculturated ethnic minority of Mande origin who live throughout Yatenga. There is also joking between the Mossi and the indigenous blacksmith caste. Unfortunately my data on these two instances of joking are inadequate.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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all the people he found there and seizing all the goods he could find, he burned the city and returned to his own country. The peoples of Mali returned afterwards to Timbuktu and remained there for the next hundred years.[20]

The Yatenga Mossi subsequently warred upon and defended themselves against the Songhai, who had tried to force Islam upon them. The Mossi were among the strongest peoples in the Niger bend area when the Moroccans arrived in 1591, and there were no wars between these two groups.

There has been a great deal of discussion among scholars of Sudanese history about the relationship between the Mossi expeditions into the Niger area and the power of early Mossi kingdoms. Marc believes that the Mossi reached their zenith late in the fifteenth century, when they attacked Walata and Timbuktu for the second time. He writes, "It was undoubtedly during this period that they extended their influence over all the territories where their language is spoken at the present day."[21]

On the other hand, Tauxier believes that the Mossi reached their apogee much earlier, toward the end of the fourteenth century. He notes that this was the period when the Mossi were "propelled by a powerful drive of expanding conquest," which carried them to Timbuktu and its neighboring regions.[22] With the recapture of Timbuktu by Mansa Souliman, however, they turned back and firmly established themselves in Gourma and Yange to the east of Ouagadougou, and among non-Mossi populations in Ouahigouya and Ouagadougou. Tauxier believes that this southern drive made the Mossi sufficiently powerful to reinvade the Niger area and thus control a territory extending from Gambaga in the south up to Timbuktu and Djenne in the north. This second period of success came to a close when the Mossi were defeated by Askia the Great of Songhai in 1497, and by Askia Daoud in 1549 and 1561. After these defeats, they not only abandoned their territories north of Ouahigouya but withdrew into their present boundaries. Tauxier concludes that from this time onward, the bonds between the different Mossi kingdoms grew weaker and the power of Ouagadougou waned.

At the same time, the Mossi kingdoms, principalities, and districts developed their internal structure and continued to absorb the Ninisi population. They also welcomed the Moslem Yarse merchants and refugees who settled in their country and adopted most aspects of their culture.[23] These Yarse refugees were joined by Mandingo-Dioula and Soninke Moslem refugees, who entered Mossi country as the result of wars or rebellions in such places as Djenne, Segou, and Timbuktu. The sheltering of these refugees by the Mossi eventually led to a series of wars between them and

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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the Bambara in the mid-eighteenth century.[24] In the course of these wars and up into modern times, many Fulani (Peulh or Fulbe) entered Mossi territory. The circumstances surrounding their first coming are not fully known, but many of them claim to have come originally from Fouta-Djalon and Fouta-Toro. They gained the good will of most of the Mossi rulers and spread throughout the territory.[25] Many of them married Mossi women, giving rise to a new group known as Simili-Mossi, who continued to raise cattle but also practiced agriculture and adopted many of the cultural traits of their hosts.[26]

There are some reports that Europeans had heard about the Mossi exploits at least from the time of King John II of Portugal, who reigned from 1481 to 1495. Marc states that the Portuguese ambassadors to Mali and Timbuktu convinced their King that the Mossi were Christians, and that he attempted to enter into relations with them. According to Barth, these attempts were made as late as 1533.[27] Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing whether the Mossi even knew about the existence of the Portuguese. After this period, there is no evidence of European interest in the Mossi until the end of the nineteenth century. As we shall see in a later chapter, the Mossi received more than their share of attention when the scramble for Africa began.

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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Naba Baongo (ca. 1800–30) decided that it was more profitable to sell them.[16] Subsequent rulers, especially the two Mogho Nanamse who ruled just prior to the French conquest, sold most of their captives to passing caravans or in special sections of the larger markets. When other persons sold slaves in the market, the Raga Naba collected some 1,000 cowries on each transaction—the largest tax on any market commodity.

The Mossi rulers seem to have benefited even more from the sale of eunuchs, for they had a monopoly over them. The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou sent some captured slaves and all recidivous thieves to Teemetenga village in Koubri district, some 13 miles south of the capital, to be operated upon.[17] So successful were the Mossi surgeons that—in contrast to specialists in other areas, who lost nine lives for every successful castration—the mortality among the Mossi was only one out of ten.[18] Some of the eunuchs furnished by the Mossi were sold as far away as Constantinople, a fact which surprised the French ambassador to Turkey who saw them there in 1900.[19]

In addition to slaves and eunuchs, the Mogho Naba kept a large number of bondsmen to provide services for him. One group, the Dapore, lived in a ward of the capital called Dapoya, and had a chief, the Dapore Naba, who was himself a Dapore. The origin of these people is obscure, but they seem to have been the children of foreign captives who were brought to Ouagadougou and placed in the ruler's service. Some of them even claimed that their ancestors had come to Ouagadougou voluntarily and had placed themselves under the care and protection of the ruler. This seems unlikely, however, since the status of these people resembles that of persons captured by Sudanese rulers and installed in special wards as serfs.[20] Some of the Dapore lived in villages of their own and cultivated fields for the Mogho Naba. Others lived in a ward of Ouagadougou, served in the palace household, and provided the royal executioners. Some were selected to serve as palace eunuchs, and placed under the charge of the Kamsaogho Naba. The Dapore were hardly ever sold unless they were convicted criminals. The Mogho Naba and his chiefs refrained from selling serfs or captives who had been born in Mossi country. However, they often claimed the sons and daughters of these people as pages or pughsiudse.

The Baglere made up the second group of bondsmen providing services for the Mogho Naba. They, too, lived in a special ward and were headed by the Baglere Naba, one of their own people. Their origin is also obscure: some of them claimed to be descended from Fulani slaves who had run away from their masters and sought asylum in Mossi country; others believed that they were the descendants of foreign captives. The Baglere

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worked for the Mogho Naba in and around the palace courtyard, and in the fields. They also kept his herds and provided him with animals from their own herds. Like the Dapore, they were seldom sold, but they often had to give their sons and daughters to the Mogho Naba.

The last group of persons who contributed their services to the Mogho Naba were the Kámboinse. Their origin is also unclear. Most of my respondents claimed that the Kamboinse and their chief first came to Ouagadougou from the direction of the Gold Coast, that they bore guns, and that they offered their services as guards to the Mogho Naba.[21] Later on, the sovereign allegedly assigned slaves to the Kamboinse unit, with the result that the entire group eventually took on a serf-like character. The Kamboinse guarded the Mogho Naba's palace and seized for him the goods of persons whom he condemned to death.

The services performed for the Mogho Naba by his pages and other youthful retainers also contributed significantly to the support of his administration. We have already seen how these young men and boys took care of his every need and functioned as important messengers within the royal household. The Mogho Naba also had control over the daughters of his serfs, whom he used to obtain revenue from aliens and subjects alike. Periodically, the Mogho Naba gave one of these girls as pughsiudga to a man, thus obligating him to render goods and services to the court. Moreover, the man had to return the eldest daughter he had by this wife to the Mogho Naba as a future pughsiudga. In this way, the sovereign had a revolving store of women through whom he could bind men to himself in a nexus of obligations, and from whom he eventually received additional women.[22]

The provincial ministers of the Ouagadougou kingdom occupied such a strategic position within the central administration that anyone rendering gifts or tribute to the Mogho Naba always gave presents to them as well. Their main source of revenue, however, came from the villages under their direct control, and from the retainers who lived in their compounds and in their wards in the capital. The economic relations between the ministers and their villages were similar to those between the district chiefs and their villages, and will be discussed below. The retainers, serfs, and slaves who served these ministers provided them with many of the services their counterparts rendered to the Mogho Naba. They kept their houses in repair and provided them with firewood and with fodder for their horses. Many of them also cultivated fields for their masters. Whenever the ministers needed extra goods or services, they called on those persons who lived in their compounds or in their wards. For example, hun-

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000 19. There is a curious story among the people of Nobere district that Mogho Naba Mottoba (who reigned in the seventeenth century) was not a Mossi but a Fulani who was given the nam after he chanced upon the installation ceremony and assassinated the newly elected man during the night. This story is denied in Ouagadougou; in fact, it contradicts the genealogical records of the ruling dynasty. However, the genealogy does show that Mottoba's father, Mogho Naba Guiliga, had succeeded his brother, and it is possible that there was dynastic rivalry for the nam between Mottoba and the former Mogho Naba's son. [174]

20. This rite was performed during the installation of the present Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, although it is hardly recognizable as described in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48): "A man named Moussa Congo assumed the name of Kougri Naba last week and became the 35th Mogho Naba of the Mossi in the capital city of Ouagadougou in the Upper Volta region of French West Africa. Son of Emperor Issoufou Congo, Kougri Naba, as the new Mogho Naba, has one white horse, 200 wives, and 8,000 warriors, who danced around his palace ten times."

21. This practice has apparently lapsed since Mogho Naba Kougri moved into the modern concrete palace built for his father, Mogho Naba Sagha II. [182]

22. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 569–70. Tauxier claims the Mogho Nanamse used the pages for homosexual purposes on Fridays in order to circumvent the Moslem prohibition against intercourse with women on this holy day. Homosexuality is rare among the Mossi, as Tauxier himself admits, and most Mossi deny that the Mogho Nanamse ever resorted to it. However, one respondent did state that he had heard about homosexuality among certain past rulers. [838]

23. Crozat, p. 4849.

24. When Mogho Naba Kom II died under mysterious circumstances in 1942, it was rumored that he had committed suicide rather than reduce the number of his wives as ordered by the administration under the influence of the Catholic missionaries. Kom allegedly held that no one can inherit a sovereign's wife during his lifetime. Therefore, in order to avoid loss of status by seeing his wives go to commoners, he chose death so they would be inherited by nobles. [648] [762] [797]

25. The statement in *Newsweek* (December 9, 1957, p. 48) that Kougri has two hundred wives is untrue. [114]

26. Intermarriage between the Mossi and the Fulani has produced a people known as the Simili-Mossi. Nevertheless, the Mossi are strongly prejudiced against the Fulani, especially against the women, stating that the Moaga who has sexual intercourse with a Fulani woman must bathe in nine different rivers before he becomes clean. The basis of this prejudice appears to be that Fulani women are not cultivators and therefore are unacceptable as Mossi wives. [563]

27. Mossi women know a great deal about the history and traditions of their people. But they never indicate that they do except during such rituals, when they are required to play certain roles.

28. Dim Delobson, p. 96.

29. Dim Delobson (p. 101) states that there are "sacred things" in this village, but I have been unable to substantiate his report.

30. Dim Delobson (p. 104) gives the classic explanation of this nighttime ride. On his ride from Bere to Djiba, the mounted prince must try to touch a certain branch of a certain tree. If he is destined to succeed his father, he will succeed in touching the branch; if he is not, the branch will magically withdraw at his approach. [824]

I visited the area in which this ritual reportedly took place, but the people in the vicinity denied that such a tree existed.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

32. IFAN (Compte Rendu No. 429). There are many other rumors concerning Kom's death. In a book praising the loyalty of the Africans to the Free French Gov- [648]

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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[p. 237]

CHAPTER 9

Trade and Markets Among the Mossi People

BY ELLIOTT P. SKINNER

The Mossi represent the dominant population of the Voltaic Republic, numbering about 1,600,000 out of some 3,200,000 inhabitants. They represent the unique example of a group which has preserved its ethnic identity and political autonomy through all the vicissitudes of Sudanic history until it was conquered by the French in 1896. Tradition records that the people who became the Mossi left the Dagomba region in present-day Ghana during the eleventh century and moved into the bend of the Niger River, carving out three large kingdoms and smaller principalities in the process. At the head of these still extant kingdoms are rulers *(Moro Nabas)* who formerly held feudal-like control over the provinces, districts and villages which comprise their domains. The villages, with their patri-local, polygynous, extended family households, formed the basic Mossi settlement pattern. A complex hierarchical administrative apparatus carried the power of the Mossi rulers into the smallest villages, and funneled taxes and tribute back to them. This structure still exists, but of course it has been modified by the French.

The Mossi were and are still divided into stratified royal, noble and commoner patrilineages. Characteristic of this lineage system is a process by which royal sub-lineages descend serially until they merge with the mass of commoner lineages. Below the lineages there once were large non-Mossi groups of serfs and slaves, but these people have now been grouped into lineages and have become Mossicized.

The topography of Mossi country is typical of the Sudanic grasslands. It is an immense plain, some 1,500 feet above sea level and broken only by three low mountain ranges and numerous small hills. The annual total rainfall is between 30 and 40 inches, and falls almost entirely as heavy showers or thundershowers during the period from June to September. So narrow is the margin of rainfall for successful crop cultivation that any variation in the cycle results in low crop yields and a difficult "hungry period" the following year before the new crops are harvested. The Mossi do not practice irrigation, and would have trouble doing so because the three Volta Rivers which drain their territory serve as drainage chiefly during the rainy season. Only the Black Volta has water all year round; the

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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443 571 sages to specific villages, to find the help needed in the event of a fight, and finally to find an escape route by which one can leave in the event of trouble.

443 463 513 The vendors in the larger markets of Mossi country include Yoruba, Hausa and other ethnic groups, many of whose members were born in Mossi country and have never visited the land of their fathers. The lives of these people are usually centered around the markets; where the markets are held every day, many of the men, women and children of these foreign groups spend almost all of their lives at the [439] markets. In marked contrast to the Mossi, they usually sell products of foreign provenience, whether African or European, and seldom deal in the local products. These vendors are tolerated by the Mossi and are valued for their commerce, but are always regarded as outsiders. And as outsiders the markets do not belong to them, but only to the Mossi. Even so, the Mossi do not really like the larger markets. 443 829 True, one can buy all kinds of wonderful goods on the large markets, but to the Mossi, a market is more than a place where one goes to buy and sell, even though everyone who goes there tries to do some of both.

443 462 438 439 There is a marked division of labor among the vendors in a Mossi market—a division which can be seen at its best on the local markets. Here only the women sell cooked food, beer, millet, rice, peanuts, shea-butter, tobacco, and all of the other locally grown vegetables and vegetable products, except cotton which may also be sold by a man. In contrast, women do not sell such local products as cotton cloth, hemp, jewelry, iron implements and leather goods, which are the province of the men. Only men may butcher and sell animals and meat in the market. And they alone control the commerce in foreign food articles such as salt and dried fish. Both men and women sell the valuable imported kola nut, but only men sell goods of European manufacture such as cigarettes, matches, sugar, mirrors and so on. [857] Small girls sell calabashes of water to everyone, and small boys wander through the market selling single cigarettes, bundles of a few matches, single lumps of sugar, chickens and guinea fowls, and skewers of roasted meat.

443 437 432 There is little competition about someone else having "stolen" a customer. The reason for this is mainly that every person in the market is a potential customer of everyone else. Normally, a buyer simply moves from seller to seller sampling the goods if that is possible (some unscrupulous men can even get drunk in the process of "sampling" beer) and trying to get the best bargain. No seller would think of running after a customer, and customers seldom, if ever, move away from a vendor in the hope that he would be called back to be sold the article at a lower price.